



MAY 2009 EDITION

300 W. Ash, Room 101
(785) 309-5745
gina.mcdonald@salina.org

Salina Human Relations

“ ... with liberty and justice for all.”

THE MISSION OF THE SALINA HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION IS TO ELIMINATE DISCRIMINATION AND TO ESTABLISH EQUALITY AND JUSTICE FOR ALL PERSONS WITHIN THE CITY OF SALINA THROUGH CIVIL RIGHTS ENFORCEMENT, ADVOCACY AND EDUCATION.

Key to happy renting? Document everything



ABOVE: Attorney Lance Cochran implores attendees at the Salina Human Relations Commission's Fair Housing Seminar to document all their transactions.

LEFT: Larry Pankratz, executive director of the Salina Housing Authority, entertains as he explains the services his agency provides.



The 50 people who attended the Salina Human Relations Commission's Fair Housing Seminar on April 17 left the morning session with three words ringing in their ears.

Document, document, document.

Presenter Lance Cochran, who does extensive work in landlord/tenant issues as part of his Salina law practice, emphasized the importance of documenting all transactions in case they need to be proven in court.

That includes taking pictures of items left behind after tenants have moved out; having a log that records all rent payments; taking pictures of the property during the pre move-in walk-through as well as when the tenant moves out; and having a good lease.

“It's all about documentation,” said Cochran, who provided attendees with several sample documents, including eviction notices for nonpayment of rent and violation of the rental agreement.

In keeping with the documentation theme, Cochran explained that while the law does allow landlords to post a notice on a tenant's door if they're not home, he recommended paying the \$10 fee to have the sheriff's office serve it. That way, in the event of a dispute, it can easily be proven that the notice was served.

“Nobody questions whether the sheriff is biased,” Cochran said.

The seminar also featured a presentation from Mike Roberts, building official with the

City of Salina. He provided information about which types of work require a building permit and what it takes to trigger enforcement action from the Building Services Department.

Roberts explained that there are minimum housing requirements that property owners are required to abide by. If a tenant suspects that the property they're living in doesn't meet those requirements, they have the legal right to allow city inspectors in to take a look.

If a violation is discovered, the property owner has 10 days to remediate the problem. If no response is received within that time frame, a notice to prosecute is sent out.

Larry Pankratz, executive director of the Salina Housing Authority, helped attendees fight off post-lunch drowsiness by using interactive exercises that involved his juggling skills. He gave a summary of SHA services.

With 163 housing units and 311 clients who receive rent-reduction vouchers, Larry and his staff have a lot to juggle.

A panel discussion led by Jean Modin (OCC), Crystal Brunner (county commission on aging) and our own Gina McDonald centered around issues affecting the elderly and the disabled.

They fielded questions about several issues, including whether landlords have to allow service animals (yes), whether they can charge a fee for having a service animal (no) and whether an injury equates to a disability (no).

SHRC seeking federal grant to target discrimination statewide

By Gina McDonald
Director, SHRC

"Knowledge will forever govern ignorance, and a people who mean to be their own governors must arm themselves with the power which knowledge gives."
— James Madison, 1822

Immigration has become one of the biggest issues facing Kansas and the nation, and in all likelihood it will only become more and more prominent with each passing year.

The Salina Human Relations Commission is submitting a grant to the Department of Justice, Office of Special Counsel (OSC), to conduct



Gina McDonald

public education programs about immigration-related job discrimination for employers and legally authorized workers.

Our partners include Catholic Charities of Northeast Kansas, Catholic Charities of North Central Kansas, the Salina Area Chamber of Commerce, Kansas State at Salina Extension office and the Kansas Human Relations Association.

If you've ever written a federal grant proposal, you know the difficulty. And this one was no exception. However, I was extremely gratified by the support and enthusiasm of everyone that we contacted and asked to partner with us. Everyone said "Yes" and "How can we help?" We have a great team working with us. If we receive the grant, I am looking forward to working with all of them.

I would have contacted more of you if not for the short turnaround time to get the grant out (two weeks). Should we receive the grant, I will be contacting many of you. If we are not successful, we'll be thinking about putting together a group to work on next year's proposal. We will probably learn about funding sometime in July.

Many thanks to Karen Houser and staff at Catholic Charities, Mary Lou Odle from Kansas State Research and Extension office, Dennis Lauver with the Salina Chamber and Larry Hackney and all members of the Kansas Human Relations Association.

We'll keep you updated on the grant. If you have any questions, feel free to e-mail us.

You can e-mail Gina at gina.mcdonald@salina.org.

Congratulations, Miss Kaye!

Kaye Crawford, former director of the Salina Human Relations Commission, was elected to the League of Women Voters of Kansas Board of Directors on May 2 in Great Bend.

Kaye also recently was elected to the board of directors for the Salina League of Women Voters.

Kaye retired in December as director of the Salina Human Relations Commission and is well known throughout the mid-plains region as a strong advocate for civil rights.

Housing group gains critical certification

A local entity took a step closer last month to being able to provide affordable housing in Salina.

The Community Housing Development Corp. of Central Kansas (also known as the Salina CHDO), was notified in April that it is state-certified.

The Salina CHDO's first project will be working with a developer and the Domestic Violence and Assault Center (DVACK) in building a housing complex for 18-24 families.

Calendar of Events

May 9: NAACP-Salina reception for 2009 graduates, St. John's Missionary Baptist Church, 3 p.m.

May 12: Salina Human Relations Commission meeting, Room 105 of the City-County Building, 5:30 p.m. (Time set aside for public forum)

May 15: Salina Area Community Services Council meeting, Health Department, noon. Guest will be from Pregnancy Service Center.

May 17: Salina NAACP monthly meeting, 3 p.m. at Salina Art Center (public is invited).

May 18: Friends of the River media conference, 11 a.m., 215 S. Santa Fe.

May 26: ESL Student Success Celebrations, day class 10 a.m. at Carver Center; night class 7 p.m. at Memorial Hall.

May 28: GED graduation, Salina Central High School auditorium, 7 p.m.

June 6: Live United Day (a day United Way volunteers help with community projects), 9 a.m. kickoff breakfast at Chamber of Commerce Developmental Center, 120 W. Ash. Interested volunteers are asked to call Volunteer Connection (823-1328) by May 29.

DID YOU KNOW?



"It's my property. I don't have to mow the grass if I don't want to, right?"

Wrong. City code requires that uncontrolled growth of grass/weeds be kept to 12 inches.

Notices are sent for a first offense. In the case of repeat violations within the same year, Kansas law allows cities, without additional notice, to cut tall grass/weeds on private property at the owner's expense.

Elliott diversity workshop event a real eye-opener for attendees

Uncomfortable? That's exactly how she wants you

By Sandra Beverly
Equal Opportunity Specialist, SHRC

On April 30, I attended the workshop for professionals given by Jane Elliott at Washburn University in Topeka. One of the most memorable things about this workshop was watching the body language of one attendee in particular who did not agree with anything the presenter had to say.

Elliott advised all those in the audience that work with people every day to begin thinking of the mixed culture of the United States as a stir fry as opposed to a melting pot. This is something I have promoted for the past 15 years. She pointed out that as a stir fry, you learn to appreciate the differences of each individual, and the characteristics are not all melted together to form some sort of mix where individuals are no longer recognized.

Elliott challenged each and every stereotype known to modern culture, including the idea that there are different races.

During the evening session, the general public was invited to attend. There was a lot of laughing but there was a great deal of learning that also took place. Even if you did not agree with everything she had to say, she said it in such a way that you were challenged to think about why you believed the things you did.

This was a personal high for me, because ever since I heard about and saw the original "blue eyes/brown eyes" classroom experiment she did following Dr. King's assassination, I have admired this woman. I would not have missed this for the world!



Jane Elliott